



# National Driver Training Institute

October 30, 2003

Public Forum on Driver Education and Training  
Wayne Tully, CEO National Driver Training Institute.

Author of

## **“Help for the Teenager Who Wants to Drive” Are we Just Dead Ducks or Can we Change**

1. People spend a fortune today trying to discover who they are. We get colors to match our complexion on the outside and psychologists to psychoanalyze us on the inside. People try to go back and reconstruct their past in hope of overcoming personal barriers. Sometimes such activities may actually help.

**We long to know who we are, but could it be that who we are is largely determined by who we think we are?**

2. **How do we come to think of ourselves as we do?** (opening slide)

There is a longstanding argument between those who think we are influenced most by our genetics and those who think we are influenced most by our environment. I'm sure that much of our upward potential is established by our genetics before we are ever born, but I am equally sure that environment is a very important factor. I believe that our environment is especially important in determining how we think of ourselves. What causes us to think of ourselves as we do?

- A. One thing that shapes us, no doubt, is the behavior of those around us. A strange thing often happens in nature; it seems to happen most often to birds like ducks and geese. Psychologists call this imprinting. The baby duck or goose thinks the first living thing it sees is its mother. That usually works out great, because usually the first thing it sees is indeed its mother. The baby is a duck and the mother is a duck, which is the way things are supposed to work.

**But what happens to the duck if the imprinting is done by some other species?**  
(2<sup>nd</sup> slide)

# National Driver Training Institute

- B. I read recently about a duck that hatched under the watchful eye of a collie dog. The duckling took one look at the collie and decided that it, too, was a collie. It followed the dog around, ran to it for protection, spent the hot part of the day under the front porch, and when a car pulled into the driveway, the duck would explode from wherever it happened to be, quacking viciously and pecking at the tires. After all, that was what its “mother” did. This duck had an identity problem. It was still a duck and sometimes acted like a duck, but sometimes it acted a lot more like a dog than a duck.

## But what does that have to do with any of us?

3. The clearest way to see this identity problem in people is to study the more than 50 documented cases of what are called feral children or wild children. These are children or infants who were raised exclusively by wild animals during all or part of their formative years.
- A. In the February 1987 edition of Sierra magazine a story entitled “Uganda’s Wild Child” told of a monkey child who was found in a jungle in Uganda and was believed to have been living with a tribe of monkeys for as long as four or five years. The boy, estimated to be five or six years old at the time, was taken to an orphanage, where he grunted and squealed, jumped around with his hands clinched, and preferred to eat grass. He seemed to be afraid of people and tried to scratch anyone who approached him.
- B. Another example is a boy who had somehow become part of an antelope herd in Southern Morocco. Antelope Boy lived with the antelopes, ate grass with them, drank from ponds with them, and roamed the hillsides with them. Several attempts were made to capture him to no avail, and he was observed living in the wild over a period of years.

These are extreme cases, but in less extreme cases in which children who had already learned their adopted wild parents language later were returned to human families, they were never able to communicate in words and never stopped acting like their animal parents. One girl learned 20 to 30 words but she used them as signals not for conversation.

- C. While these are strange and bizarre cases, I wonder how much we all suffer from imprinting and how much we are limited because of the home or school or church we were raised in.

## Is change impossible?

4. Could it also be true we drive as we were driven? For fifteen plus years teenagers have watched their parents drive through neighborhoods, cities, towns and how they respond to other drivers who cross their path of travel on our streets and highways. They naturally would react the same way their parents do because of imprinting.

# National Driver Training Institute

Driver education instructors try to change behavioral patterns the students learned from their parents; however, the teenagers ultimately will revert back to the driving habits of their parents after a few short months. This imprinting of our young has cost us 12,000 novice drivers a year. More importantly these bizarre driving habits cost us 30,000 mature drivers each year. Last year a lost of 42,000 plus people to fatal car crashes were added to our watch. What can be done to change this trend that is getting worse as each year passes? Are we imprinted for life just as the duck or the wild children?

## 5 **Do driver educators and instructors across this country also suffer from imprinting?**

**How about the professors and doctors who certify those instructors?**

Fifty years ago we set the standards for driver education and training. Today the standards remain almost static. There is not even one person in this room today that thinks we can teach our novice drivers how to drive with 30 hours of classroom study and 6 hours of behind the-wheel-training. However, if you were to pick up a phone book in any city in any state **you will find only the standards** set over fifty years ago for sale.

Maybe you will find a company here or there that may have other offers to help customize a program for the calling family. Even if change were a matter of life or death our imprinting and the environment around us would cause us to migrate to the comfortable traditional standards of teaching. Change is not going to be popular. Change may cost jobs, friendships and a lot of pride. To those of you here today who have participated in weight loss programs or quit smoking programs of one sort or another and have been successful, congratulations. I can testify to you this is hard work and it takes change. Those of you who have not been as successful as you could have been, keep trying, you'll get their, just don't give up.

### **Why?**

Unlike the duckling we humans have the ability and intuition to improve our standards of living. We are here today for change, and if we do not change the direction of our driver education and training process we are going to end up where we're headed. We are the masters of our profession and we need to recognize that we will be held accountable for not recognizing the imminent danger our nation is facing.

I believe we can change this deadly direction of our industry, but not by ourselves. We need to help each other; we need a plan to include the entire family, schools, cities, counties and states. We need to create driving education and training programs for the household reinforced with rules, backed up by school rules, enforced by city laws if needed, allowing for county overseeing outside the city and finally state and/or federal legislation if needed. We need a plan with clear objectives. We need a time line attached to the plan. We need a clear evaluation of what is working to reduce the crash fatalities in this country in order to determine what isn't working and then bring an end to those training programs not working.

# National Driver Training Institute

In just a minute, I want to go over a few changes that we can make toward a great start. But first I want to share with you what National Driver Training Institute is doing for teenagers and their families in four countries including the United States.

(Power Point Presentation)

Here are nine essentials that we, as an industry, should strive for. **Total Cost ZERO**

- A. Every state should have in place a minimum of 50 hours prescribe structured behind the wheel training with the parents.
- B. Every state should legislate a minimum of one year on a beginning driver permit for any one under 18 years, and 6months for those over 18 years who are first time drivers..
- C. Allow teens to start driving with a learners permit at age 15, give them as much training as possible before they receive a junior driver's license.
- D. Integrate the education and training. They should be concurrent with one another
- E. Create legislation for all teen-driving permits to be valid for not less than 3 years.
- F. If the state can afford behind-the-wheel training of the novice drivers then allow the instructors to teach 6 hours of the required 50 hours of the practical training concurrently with the state approved 30-hour classroom program.
- G. Set nighttime curfews and limit the first year of driving to one passenger
- H. No cellular use while driving.
- I. **Do not allow more than one student per car per instructor.** Always encourage parents to do a ride along at any time and any lesson. Some schools may want to require parents to ride along.

If we change the way we think, teach and drive we can reduce the fatal numbers we seem to top year after year. We must re-map the imprinting of driver education and training to accomplish this task.

Allow the parents to become a part of this training process and they too will improve their driving habits. Send the classroom work and latest traffic videos into the home and the entire family along with their teenager will become great drivers. Have you ever seen a 6-year-old walk away from a Vince and Larry video? **Start the new imprinting on our toddlers and they will become the best drivers in the history of the automobile.** Your target should not be the teenager exclusively; it's the whole family. Your main objective is the toddler and the imprinting of that toddler.

With 42,000 auto fatalities last year have we have reached a high in our record?

Today, we are classified as the worst drivers in the history of the automobile.

The bad news, we let this happen on our watch.

We can continue living like the collie and the duck, biting at the tires of the problem or we can change the way we think.

# National Driver Training Institute

Our United States Air Force is the very best in the world. In flight school, pilot trainees are in classroom, lectures and then flight with an IP concurrently 9 times before they ever fly off base, and then only if the students have achieved the required objectives. Throw out your six-hour clock and replace it with a point system. Allow the driving instructor and teachers to become inspectors of the student's progress and driving testers for the state. Teens that cannot test out of a level are restrained from progressing forward until they can master the level in which they are in. Parents who need additional guidance can hire teachers and instructors for their customized needs.

End the driver education completion certificate and replace it with an Achievement of Competency and Skill Certificate.

Let's agree to remap the imprinting of every mom, dad, teacher, instructor, professor, House Representative, and State Senator and this year lets lower the fatalities of this great country.

This serious problem we are witnessing today is not just our problem, it is every ones problem and we need every one to participate in its' cure.

**“Let's Create a Family of Safe Drivers for Life”**

**My name is Wayne Tully; and I have a plan, it includes the family.**

**together will “Create a family of safe drivers for life”.**

**Thank You**